

It is just common sense to do everything we can to embrace an all-of-the-above approach that is environmentally friendly as well as affordable for the American people.

The American Energy Act is good for the country. We can drill safely off our shores for oil and natural gas. That will create American jobs and make us less dependent on foreigners.

We need to use more nuclear and hydroenergy, and eventually we will, as an American Nation, develop alternative energy. Meanwhile, we don't need the bureaucrats forcing Americans into a none-of-the-above energy plan, raising taxes and forcing us to drive unsafe cars.

And that's just the way it is.

THE UNSHAKABLE BOND BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND ISRAEL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the unshakable bond between the United States and Israel. I believe that support for Israel in this Congress is very strong and it is very bipartisan.

I want to commend President Obama for making that speech in Cairo, where he spoke before an Arab audience in what is the most important Arab capital and said that the bond between the United States and Israel is unbreakable. I think those are very, very important words and courageous words coming from the President of the United States in an arena where nothing has ever been said like that before from the President of the United States in such an arena.

But I want to also focus on some of the other things that have happened, namely the push in some quarters to force Israel to make unilateral concessions, mostly about settlements, but unilateral concessions, in return for nothing.

I believe that the Palestinian-Israeli problem must be settled by negotiations and a two-state solution. But I believe that forcing Israel to make unilateral concessions up front is wrong policy.

The agreement will be made ultimately by Israelis and Palestinians, not by Americans, and if Israel is going to negotiate settlements and other things, as Israel will, then simultaneously the Arab States, the Palestinians, I should say, should also be negotiating and giving up things simultaneously.

People say, well, the roadmap which Israel and the Palestinians signed says as a first step Israel must cease settlement activity. That is true. But it also said simultaneously that the Arabs must stop incitement and have a cessation of violence.

So if those two things are done simultaneously and talked about, that is fine. But this public confrontation

against Israel, public demands put upon Israel to halt settlements while the Arabs or the Palestinians have to give nothing in return, is absolutely wrong.

Palestinian President Abbas said the other day, well, he is going to just sit back and let the Israelis make all the concessions. He doesn't have to do anything. Well, that is wrong, and if we pressure the Israelis to make unilateral concessions, we are never going to have peace. Concessions have to be made simultaneously.

I know my good colleague the gentlewoman from Nevada (Ms. BERKLEY) feels as I do, and I would like to yield to her for some of her comments on this matter.

Ms. BERKLEY. Well, Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to be able to share this time with my very dear friend and colleague, ELIOT ENGEL from New York. I think he made very clear how anxious we are to see peace come to the Middle East and how we support a two-state solution that has been America's policy in the Middle East for many years.

But there is another component to that, and that component is that the Palestinians have to show good faith too—and by showing good faith, that means recognizing Israel's right to exist, adhering to prior agreements and doing other things that would demonstrate, including ending the terror and the violence against Israel—that they are serious partners for peace.

ELIOT, when they talk about sitting down at the peace table, you need to have a partner at the peace table, particularly one that recognizes your right to exist. If your peace partner, so-called, doesn't recognize your right to exist, what are you negotiating, for your right to exist for 10 years, 20 years, 30 years?

When the Palestinians show good faith by truly ending the terrorism, recognizing Israel's right to exist, adhering to prior agreements calling for peace and other measures, then the Israelis can have the security they need to sit down and negotiate a two-state solution.

They have made unilateral withdrawals of land over multiple decades, and, as my dear colleague knows, these have been very, very tough choices for Israel. They have made them with very little in return.

Mr. ENGEL. I thank the gentlewoman. Let me say this: It is time for the Arabs to step up and normalize relations now with Israel.

I will have more to say in a little while.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. WOOLSEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE SERVICE MEMBERS FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYER RELIEF ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, earlier this year Congress passed H.R. 1, better known as the economic stimulus package. Included in this package was a provision which modified the first-time homebuyers tax credit language that Congress passed last year. Under the new provision, a first-time homebuyer who purchased a home before December 1, 2009, would get a tax credit of \$8,000, which can be fully retained by the homebuyer so long as the homebuyer does not sell the home for 36 months after purchase. If the home is sold prior to 36 months, the credit will have to be repaid.

Mr. Speaker, under this law, it is unlikely that U.S. servicemen and women who buy their first homes will be able to use the first-time homebuyer tax credit like other American taxpayers. Because many of our military personnel serve at a duty station for only a few years at a time, those who buy a first home are often transferred and have to sell their first residence before the 36-month holding requirement is met.

I recently introduced legislation that would fix this problem by allowing our military men and women the flexibility they need to benefit from this tax credit. H.R. 2398, the Service Members First-Time Homebuyer Relief Act, would amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a member of the United States Armed Forces to retain the first-time homebuyer tax credit if they must sell their home within 36 months of purchase because the servicemember is, one, transferred to a new duty station; two, deployed overseas; or, three, required to reside in government quarters during that period.

□ 1915

I am very pleased that this legislation has received the support of the National Military Families Association. Their letter of support for this bill states, and I quote: "Thank you for recognizing the mobile lifestyle of servicemembers and their families. H.R. 2398 waives the recapture of the first-time homebuyer's tax credit for servicemembers who are transferred to a different duty station or deployed overseas. Moves and deployments can be stressful for military families and H.R. 2398 helps alleviate a financial concern of military families."

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I will submit the text of this letter for the RECORD.

NATIONAL MILITARY
FAMILY ASSOCIATION,
May 28, 2009.

Hon. WALTER B. JONES, Jr.,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE JONES: The National Military Family Association has long been an advocate for improving the quality of life of our military family members, who